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SIPDIS

PA/PR/FPC (ASILAS); NEA/PPD (CBOURGEOIS, DMACINNES); NEA/ARN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: OEXC SCUL JO

SUBJECT: FOREIGN PRESS CENTER'S BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC REPORTING TOUR - PROGRAM EVALUATION

¶1. SUMMARY: MS. LUBNA ABDUL HAQ, AN ECONOMIC REPORTER AT "AL-ARAB AL-YAWM" ARABIC DAILY NEWSPAPER, AND MS. HALA AL HADIDI, AN ECONOMIC REPORTER AT JORDAN NEWS AGENCY (PETRA) WERE PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOREIGN PRESS CENTER'S BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC REPORTING TOUR, SEPTEMBER 15-28, 2002 (NON-IV ALLOCATION). PAS STAFF MET WITH BOTH MS. ABDUL HAQ AND MS. AL HADIDI TO GET THEIR FEED BACK ON THE TOUR. THEY BOTH COMMENTED THAT IT WAS AN EXCELLENT, IF INTENSE, PROGRAM, WHICH HELPED THEM GET A GOOD INSIGHT ON ECONOMIC REPORTING IN THE U.S. THEY WERE PLEASED THAT THE TOUR PROVIDED THEM WITH A VALUABLE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH U.S. GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA OFFICIALS TO EXCHANGE VIEWS AND TO UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT U.S. ECONOMIC POLICY AND JOURNALISM IN THE U.S. THEY VALUED, IN PARTICULAR, THEIR INTERACTION WITH THE ARAB AND MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO AND NEW YORK CITY. BOTH MS. ABDUL HAQ AND MS. AL HADIDI WISHED THAT THE TOUR WAS THREE WEEKS INSTEAD OF TWO WEEKS LONG TO HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO GRASP EVERYTHING THEY LEARNED AND TO PROVIDE THEIR OWN FEED BACK ON EACH LEG OF THE TOUR. END SUMMARY.

¶2. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES: THE FOREIGN PRESS CENTER'S BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC REPORTING TOUR TOOK PLACE SEPTEMBER 15-28, 2002. THE ITINERARY INCLUDED WASHINGTON D.C.; CHICAGO AND NEW YORK.

¶3. DATES/FISCAL YEAR/QUARTER: SEPTEMBER 15-28, 2002; FY 02; FOURTH QUARTER.

¶4. JUSTIFICATION AND OBJECTIVES:

POST NOMINATED TWO YOUNG REPORTERS WHO ARE AVID REPORTERS ON JORDANIAN-AMERICAN ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS, INCLUDING BILATERAL AGREEMENT SIGNINGS OF U.S. ASSISTANCE TO JORDAN. HAVING HAD NO PRIOR EXPOSURE TO THE U.S. SOCIETY AND POLITICAL SYSTEM, THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THIS THEMATIC TOUR WAS ESSENTIAL TO U.S. MISSION OBJECTIVES.

¶5. MPP UMBRELLA THEME; THE PROGRAM SUPPORTED MPP OBJECTIVE ON "DEMOCRACY AND FREE FLOW OF INFORMATION."

¶6. RESULTS AND IMPACT: DESPITE BEING QUITE INTENSIVE, MS. ABDUL HAQ AND MS. AL HADIDI FOUND THE TOUR EXCELLENT AND VERY USEFUL AS IT PROVIDED THEM WITH WORTHWHILE INSIGHT ON U.S. ECONOMIC POLICY AND ECONOMIC/BUSINESS REPORTING. BOTH REPORTERS WERE VERY PLEASED WITH ALL THE MEETINGS SCHEDULED IN THEIR TOUR. THEY APPRECIATED THE GOOD EFFORTS EXERTED IN SETTING UP MEETINGS, HOPING THAT FUTURE PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE MORE TIME BETWEEN EACH MEETING OR EVENT TO ORGANIZE THEIR THOUGHTS AND TO REFLECT ON THE OUTCOME. BOTH REPORTERS HIGHLY VALUED THEIR VISITS TO VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS AND TV STATIONS. SOMETIMES THEY FELT THAT CERTAIN U.S. OFFICIALS AND NEWSPAPER EDITORS LACKED PREPAREDNESS IN RESPONDING TO PARTICIPANTS' QUESTIONS, ESPECIALLY WHEN THE ANSWER INVOLVED NUMBERS AND FIGURES ON U.S. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO THE MIDDLE EAST.

THEY ALSO LEARNED A GREAT DEAL FROM INTERACTING WITH THE ARAB AND MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN CHICAGO AND NEW YORK CITY, AND WERE VERY IMPRESSED WITH THE SUCCESS OF SO MANY BUSINESSES RUN BY ARAB AMERICANS IN THE UNITED STATES. HAVING HAD NO PRIOR EXPOSURE TO U.S. SOCIETY, BOTH REPORTERS WERE ALSO IMPRESSED WITH THE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ENJOY AND THE SIGNS OF PATRIOTISM THEY DISPLAY EVERYWHERE IN THE WAKE OF 9/11.

MS. ABDUL HAQ AND MS. AL HADIDI WOULD HAVE LIKED TO MEET WITH U.S. GROUPS AND FIGURES THAT OPPOSE U.S. POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST TO GET THE FULL PICTURE ON HOW PEOPLE VIEW THIS MATTER. THEY ALSO QUESTIONED THE SELECTION OF SEVERAL OF THE PARTICIPANTS, NOTING THAT TWO OF THEM WERE NOT ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS REPORTERS, AND DID NOT APPEAR TO RELATE TO THE CONTENTS OF THE TOUR.

BOTH REPORTERS WERE NOT TOO HAPPY BY WHAT THEY VIEWED AS STRICT SECURITY MEASURES, PARTICULARLY THE PHYSICAL INSPECTIONS THEY HAD TO GO THROUGH AT U.S. AIRPORTS. HOWEVER, THEY WERE WELL AWARE THAT THOSE MEASURES ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO ENSURE THE SAFETY AND SECURITY OF CITIZENS AND VISITORS ALIKE.

MEDIA COVERAGE: DURING THE TOUR, MS. ABDUL HAQ FILED FIVE STORIES IN ARABIC, ALL OF WHICH WERE PUBLISHED IN AL-ARAB AL-

YAWM. MS. AL HADIDI FILED SIX STORIES IN ARABIC. POST WILL PROVIDE A COPY OF EACH OF THESE STORIES. THE FOLLOWING ARE HEADLINES OF MS. ABDUL HAQ'S STORIES PUBLISHED IN AL-ARAB AL-YAWM:

SEPTEMBER 19:

"THE U.S. ADMINISTRATION FREEZES \$112 MILLION IN ASSETS SUSPECTED OF CONNECTION TO TERRORISM"

"THE MONEY BELONGS TO 236 INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS WORLDWIDE"

SEPTEMBER 20:

"OFFICIALS FROM THE U.S. DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND COMMERCE SAY THAT ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB WORLD HAVE DETERIORATED BECAUSE OF THE RECEDED U.S. ECONOMY"

"A STRIKE AGAINST IRAQ WILL AFFECT NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES"

SEPTEMBER 26:

"THE ARAB LEAGUE IS DISCUSSING A JOINT ARAB-AMERICAN ECONOMIC CONFERENCE IN DETROIT NEXT MAY 15-17"

SEPTEMBER 28:

"DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR, JORDAN IS IN 85TH PLACE ON THE LIST OF EXPORTERS TO THE UNITED STATES"

OCTOBER 3:

"ARAB BUSINESSMEN ACHIEVE A BANKING SUCCESS STORY IN AMERICA"

17. QUALITY OF US. SUPPORT: EXCELLENT. BOTH PARTICIPANTS APPRECIATED THE HARD WORK PUT INTO THIS PROGRAM. THEY HIGHLY COMMENDED MR. ALGIS SILAS FROM THE FPC FOR HIS ENTHUSIASM AND DILIGENCE. THEY WERE ALSO IMPRESSED WITH THE PROFESSIONALISM OF THE ESCORT/INTERPRETER TEAM.
GNEHM